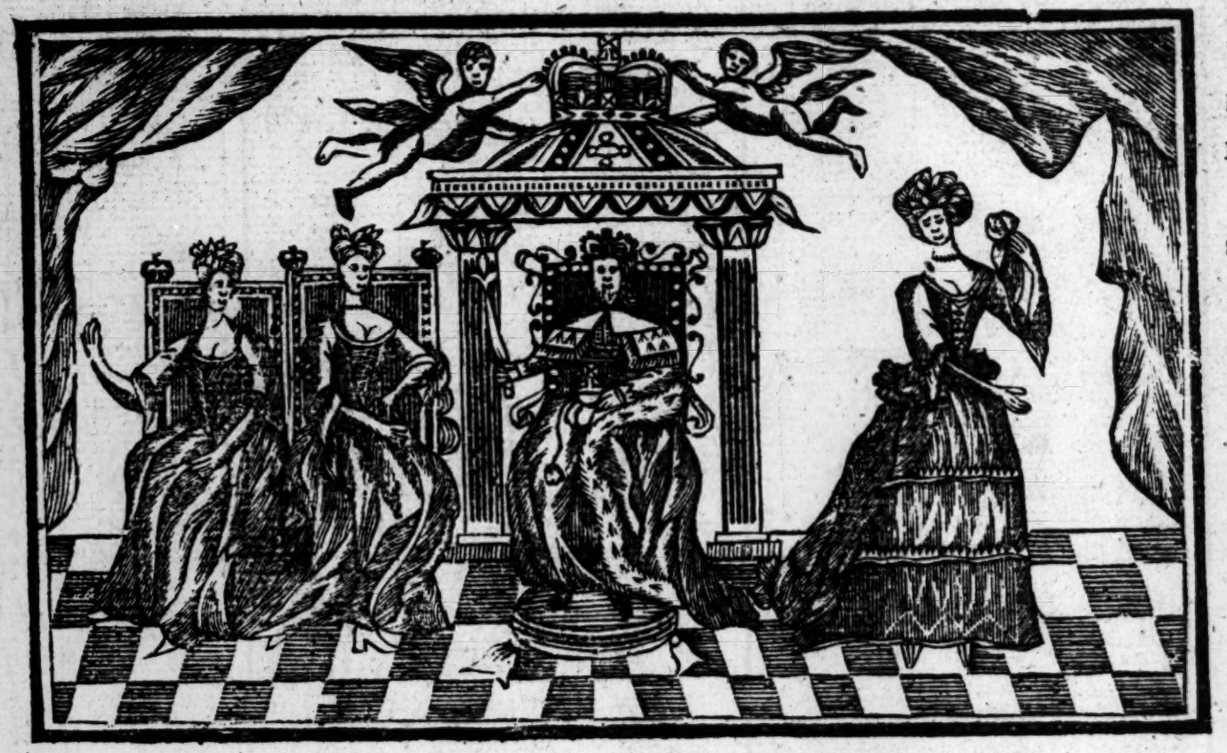
King LEAR *and his Three Daughters.*



KING Lear once ruled in this land,
With princely pri ſe and peace ;
And had all things with heart's content,
That might his joys increaſe :
Among thoſe this that nature gave,
Three deughters fair had he,
So princely ſeeming beautiful,
As fairer could not be.
So on a time it pleas'd the king,
A queſtion thus to move :
Which of his daughters to his grace
Could ſhew the deareſt love.
For to my age you bring content ;
Quoth he, then let me hear
Which of you three in plighted troth
The kindeſt will appear.
To this the eldeſt firſt began,
Dear father, mild, quoth ſhe,
Bef re your face to do you good
My blood ſhall render'd be :
And for your ſake my bleeding heart
Shall there be cut in twain,
'Ere that I ſee your reverend age
The ſmalleſt grief ſuſtain.
And ſo will I, the ſecond ſaid,
Dear father, for you ſake ;
The worſt of all extremities
For you I'll undertake.
And ſerve your Highneſs night and day,
With diligence and love ;
That ſweet content and quietneſs
Diſcomfort may remove.

In doing ſo, you glad my ſoul,
The aged father reply'd.
But what ſay'ſt thou, my youngeſt girl,
How ſtands thy love ally'd !
My love, quoth young Cordelia, then,
Which to your grace I owe,
Shall be the duty of a child,
And that is all I ſhall beſtow.
And wilt thou ſhow no more, ſaid he,
Than doth thy duty bind ?
I well perceive thy love is ſmall,
When as no more we find.
Henceforth I baniſh thee my court,
Thou art no child of mine :
Nor any part of this my realm,
By favour ſhall be thine,
Thy eldeſt ſiſter's loves are more
Than well I can demand ;
To whom I equally beſtow
My kingdom and my land.
My pompeous ſtate and all my goods :
That lovingly I may
With thoſe thy ſiſters be maintain'd,
Until my dying day.
Thus flatteeing ſpeeches won renown,
By theſe two ſiſters here :
The third had cauſeleſs baniſhment,
Yet was her love moſt dear.
For poor Cordelia patiently
Went wandering up and down,
Unhelp'd, unpity'd, gentle maid,
Thro' many an Engliſh town.

Until at laſt in famous France,
She gentle fortune found ;
Tho' poor and bare, yet ſhe was deem'd
The faireſt on the ground.
Where when the king her virtue heard,
And this fair lady ſeen,
With full conſent of all the court,
He made her his wife and queen.
Her father, old king Lear, this while
With his two daughters ſtaid,
Forgetful of their promis'd loves,
Full ſoon the ſame deny'd.
And living in queen Regan's court,
The eldeſt of the twain,
She took from him his chiefeſt means,
And moſt of all his train.
For whereas twenty men were wont
To wait with bended knee ;
She gave allowance but to ten,
And after ſcarce to three.
Nay, one ſhe thought too much for him,
So ſhe took all away
In hopes that in her court, good king !
He would no longer ſtay.
Am I rewarded thus, ſaid he,
For giving all I have
Unto my children ? and to beg
For what I want or crave.
I'll go unto my Goneril,
My ſecond child, I know
Will be more kind and bountiful,
And will relieve my woe.
Full faſt he hies unto her court,
Where when ſhe hears his moan,
Return'd him anſwer that ſhe griev'd
That all his means were gone.
But no ways could relieve his wants.
Yet if that he would ſtay,
Within her kitchen, he might have
What ſcullions gave away.
When he had heard with bitter tears,
He made this anſwer then,
In what I did let me be made
Examples to all men.
I will return again, ſaid he,
Unto my Regan's court ;
She will not uſe me thus, I hope,
But in a kinder ſort.
Where when he came, ſhe gave command
To drive him thence away ;
When he was well within my court,
Quoth ſhe, he could not ſtay.
Then back again to Goneril,
The woeful king did hie ;
That in her kitchen he might have,
What ſcullions did ſet by.
But there of that he was deny'd,
Which ſhe had promis'd late ;
For once refuſing he ſhould not
Come after to her gate.

Thus 'twixt his daughters, for relief
He wander'd up and down,
Being glad to feed on beggar's food,
That lately wore a crown.
And calling to remembrance then
His youngeſt daughter's words,
Who ſaid the duty of a child
Was all that love affords ;
But doubting to repair to her,
Whom he had baniſh'd ſo,
Grew frantic mad, and in his mind,
He bore the wounds of woe.
Which made him rend his milk-white locks,
And treſſes from his head ;
And all with blood beſtain'd his cheeks,
With age and honour ſpread.
To hills and woods and watery founts
He made his hourly moan,
Till hills and woods and ſenſeleſs things,
Did ſeem to ſigh and groan.
Even thus preſs'd with diſcontent,
He paſſed o'er to France.
In hopes from kind Cordelia there,
To find ſome gentler chance.
Moſt virtuous dame ! which when ſhe heard
Of this her father's grief,
As in duty bound, ſhe quickly ſent
Him comfort and relief.
And by a train of noble peers,
In brave and gallant ſort,
She gave in charge he ſhould be brought
To Aganipus's court ;
Whoſe royal king, whoſe noble mind,
So freely gave conſent
To muſter up his knights at arms,
To fame and courage bent.
And ſo to England came with ſpeed,
To repoſſeſs king Lear ;
And drive his daughters from their thrones,
By his Cordelia dear.
Where ſhe, true-hearted noble queen,
Was in the battle ſlain ;
Yet he, good king, in his old days
Poſſeſs'd his crown again.
But when he heard of Cordelia's death,
Who dy'd indeed for love
Of her dear father, in whoſe cauſe
She did the battle move ;
He ſwooning fell upon her breaſt,
From whence he never parted ;
But on her boſom left his life,
That was ſo truly hearted.
The Lords and Nobles when they ſaw
The end of theſe events ;
The other ſiſters unto death
They doomed by conſents.
And being dead their crowns they left
Unto the next of kin.
Thus have you ſeen the fall of pride,
And diſobedient ſin.

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